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SCIENCE

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FRIDAY, APRIL 22, 1898.

A CENTURY OF GEOGRAPHY IN THE UNITED STATES.*

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MEN and women occupied with the small and special details of a large and complex work are not well situated for understanding the scope of the large work to which they contribute. The shop girl in Waterbury who spends her days and years in cutting threads on tiny screws may have very limited knowledge and erroneous opinions about the watch industry. The trained arithmetician who spends his months and years in adjusting triangulation or verifying computation does not thereby acquire valuable opinions as to the scope and conduct of a great national survey. In our day many, if not all, branches of human knowledge and activity are widening. As they widen they are specialized. The student of nature, the practitioner of medicine or law, the artisan, each is prone to contract the size of his field of activity and to study more profoundly some small part of the large subject. Even the farms grow smaller and are better cultivated than formerly. Such subdivision of the field of study and activity into special and smaller fields has for a century at least progressed steadily, and the world has gained thereby. Many have become profoundly learned or highly skilled in some small subject. You

* The annual Presidential address before the Philosophical Society of Washington, delivered April 2, 1898.